

## **PSAP Consolidations in the Commonwealth**

Currently local governments can obtain funding for primary wireless PSAP consolidations through the PSAP Grant Program. A consolidation project is a specialized grant type, which is eligible for a maximum award of \$500,000 and a 36 month grant period to complete the project. Grant funding for an initial consolidation is a one-time only grant. A PSAP involved in an initial consolidation project may participate in a secondary consolidation project with other PSAPs only after the initial project has been completed. Additional funding for a secondary consolidation is limited to \$325,000.

### ***Relevant definitions***

- Consolidation – means the combining of two or more primary PSAPs into a single physically combined primary PSAP with an integrated management structure established by MOUs that serves the same constituent population previously served by the independent primary PSAPs. In addition, all parties must benefit directly from the consolidation activities implemented with a grant award.
- Consolidation Project – means a project that meets the narrow criteria of “consolidation”.
- Initial Consolidation – means the initial, primary, or first consolidation of two or more primary PSAPs.
- Secondary Consolidation – means the consolidation of a primary or consolidated PSAP with an already consolidated PSAP prior to the expiration of the 3 year period of the initial consolidation project .

### ***Application Prerequisites***

Primary PSAPs interested in obtaining grant funding for a consolidation project must first satisfy two prerequisites before submitting a grant request. These prerequisites are demonstrated local commitment and feasibility.

- First, the localities that govern the PSAPs involved in this consolidation must sign a Statement of Intent in support of consolidation.
- Second, a feasibility study must be completed that provides answers to the following questions:
  - How would a consolidation take place and provide improved service;
  - How should it be organized and staffed;
  - What services should it perform;
  - How should policies be made and changed;
  - How should it be funded; and,
  - What communication changes or improvements should be made in order to better support operations.

This feasibility study may be completed with local funds, staff assistance, financial support from VITA, or uncommitted grant funding at the discretion of the Board.

### ***Requirements***

One of the primary PSAPs participating in the consolidation project must act as the “host applicant” in a funding request. The “host” will be the fiscal agent responsible for fulfilling all grant requirements such as reports, control of and accounting for funds, and distribution and control of equipment purchased with the grant award. All jurisdictions participating in a consolidation project must be identified in the grant application. A signed joint MOU must be provided by all of the participating localities with the consolidation grant application.

### ***Current Consolidation Projects***

Since the inception of the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) Grant Program in 2007, the E-911 Services Board has funded three consolidation projects for localities with primary wireless PSAPs. These projects and awards are as follows:

- Wythe County and the City of Wytheville - \$717,714
- Alleghany County and the City of Covington - \$800,000
- York County and the Cities of Poquoson and Williamsburg - \$1,427,000

### ***Wythe/Wytheville Consolidation***

Wythe and Wytheville began their project in 2008. Since the town of Wytheville is located within Wythe County, the PSAP managers for these localities have long relied upon each other for mutual aid. However, because each PSAP maintained their own separate Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) and Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), they were limited in their ability to share information. Once funding became available through the PSAP Grant Program, the PSAP managers for Wythe and Wytheville started talking about how to overcome this limitation and the possibility of a physical consolidation. In 2007, the E-911 Services Board paid for a consolidation feasibility study. The study supported a consolidation on the basis of cost savings for participating localities and increased services to citizens. The localities made the decision to move forward with the consolidation project.

Initially, Bland County was part of the consolidation project, but Bland decided to withdraw before any construction began. The reason cited by Bland County was the reluctance of their local government to have 9-1-1 services provided by a PSAP that was not physically located within Bland County. However, Bland County has decided to participate in a co-location of technological resources with the combined Wythe and Wytheville PSAP, once it is completed.

Physical consolidations take several years to complete and funding is only one of the necessary resources. Consolidations require a local “champion” and the support of local government. Although the PSAP managers were strong supporters from the beginning, it took time to bring local government leaders on board. Then, additional time was needed to make sure that adequate funding was available for the entire consolidation project. Funds from the E-911 Services Board were not enough to pay for the entire project. And finally, time was needed to select a site for the consolidated PSAP.

The Wythe/Wytheville consolidated PSAP is in the final stages of construction and the building is expected to be completed by July 2012. Equipment purchases are underway and the new PSAP is targeted to be operational in October 2012.

### ***Alleghany/Covington Consolidation***

Alleghany County and the City of Covington also began their project in 2008. Given the contiguous relationship of these localities and their limited resources, these localities decided to move forward with a physical consolidation with funding from the PSAP Grant Program. This decision was underscored by the results of a consolidation feasibility study that was paid for by the E-911 Services Board in 2007. Similar to the Wythe and Wytheville study, the Alleghany and Covington study supported a consolidation on the basis of cost savings for participating localities and increased services to citizens.

However, unlike the Wythe and Wytheville project, this consolidation will take several additional years to complete. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, there was a change in local government leadership. As a result, the consolidation project was put on hold as time was needed to educate new local government leaders. The funding commitment from the E-911 Services Board was key to gaining local government support. And second, it took a couple of years to locate an appropriate site for the new consolidated PSAP. The site selections recommended in the feasibility study proved to be problematic.

As these larger issues were being sorted out, the PSAP managers focused on upgrading the technology in their separate centers, which will be used in the consolidated PSAP. Radio line of site studies have been completed and a Statement of Work has been signed and executed to upgrade the Dispatch resources with a uniform CAD/mapping system. The consolidated PSAP is targeted for completion in June 2015.

### ***York/Poquoson/Williamsburg Consolidation***

The Consolidation of York County and the Cities of Poquoson and Williamsburg has been completed. York County had a local champion that was instrumental in providing the necessary leadership. Also, shared communication infrastructure already existed among these three localities. This accounted for much of the governance issues being settled before the physical consolidation began. And since

Williamsburg and Poquoson were already relying on York County for 9-1-1 back-up, physical consolidation with York County had already been contemplated.

In addition to the above consolidations, there are two other PSAP consolidations occurring in the Commonwealth. The localities involved in these projects have received funding through the PSAP Grant program for equipment, but not for a consolidation. These consolidations are:

- Montgomery County and the Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg
- King William County and the Town of West Point

### ***Montgomery/Blacksburg/Christiansburg Consolidation***

The consolidation of Montgomery County and the Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg is the most comprehensive consolidation to date. These localities have agreed to co-locate their consolidated PSAP with VA Tech. The first step completed in their consolidation effort was the establishment of interoperability governance. An authority was created to provide a unified approach across jurisdictions and disciplines. The vision of the authority is to provide a well-managed interoperability infrastructure that reflects national standards and the needs of localities. The mission of the Authority is to provide 9-1-1 dispatch and emergency communication services to the people of the New River Valley. Included in this consolidation project is shared CPE, a radio analysis, and a CAD/Record Management System (RMS) consolidation. The plan is to deploy a regional broadband IP network that can support CAD/RMS, 9-1-1, and other public safety communication applications. The completion of this comprehensive consolidation project is still a few years away.

### ***King William/West Point***

The consolidation between King William County and the Town of West Point is a relatively simple project since the construction of a new facility is not required. The localities of King William and the Town of West Point are contiguous and the plan is for King William County to begin receiving West Point's 9-1-1 calls. This "consolidation" will take place over the next few months.